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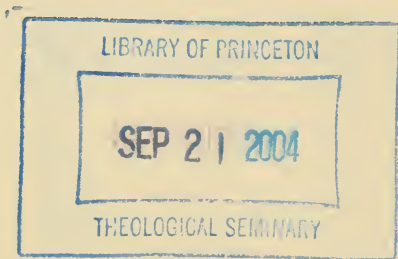








A MINISTRY *of*  
RECONCILIATION



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*By the*  
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# A MINISTRY *of* RECONCILIATION

By ✓

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*of the* Fifth Avenue Baptist Church

New York



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

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New York : 158 Fifth Avenue  
Chicago : 80 Wabash Avenue  
Toronto : 25 Richmond St., W.  
London : 21 Paternoster Square  
Edinburgh : 100 Princes Street

*“And gave unto us the Ministry of Reconciliation.”* 2 Corinthians, 5. 18.

**A** MINISTRY of Reconciliation! The idea is five times repeated in two complete sentences. A Ministry of Reconciliation committed unto us. And the dynamic of such a ministry is in this word, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us. And we beseech you, on behalf of Christ, Be ye reconciled to God.

Herein is the meaning of the Incarnation and the purpose of the Atonement. God is in Christ reconciling His children unto Himself. Men have been alienated from God. The unthoughtful have stood in terror of Him. The thoughtful have hated Him. And this they

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have done because they have misconceived Him utterly. He has been slandered to them. Yet they do but need to know Him as He is and for what He is to love Him as a parent and serve Him as a King. The only begotten Son who was in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. He has declared Him by His first, best name of Love. He is not the pitiless tyrant of men whom the heathen saw when they looked into the magic mirror of the unknowable, beheld an exaggerated and distorted image of themselves, and called it God. He is the loving Father of us all. And though His children are estranged from Him and know not that they are His, He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and bringing His dear ones Home.

This Ministry of Reconciliation is entrusted to us. This is what Churches are for. For this preachers live. Churches are maintained and preachers exist to remind you of the eter-

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nal laws you must obey, and the eternal love in which you may rest. And the Ministry of Reconciliation does not end, it begins, when by conversion and avowal of faith in Christ the individual soul takes its first step back to God. For this letter to the Corinthians, like all the epistles of the New Testament, is addressed to members of the Church, men and women who have been redeemed from their sins, born again by the Spirit, baptised into Christ, and united with the fellowship of the Church of God. The plea is to them and to us: As ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us, we beseech you, Be ye reconciled to God.

Today\* I enter upon my ministry to your great Church, and, if it be the will of God, upon a larger ministry in the city and in the nation. Henceforth I occupy as pastor—your servant for Christ's sake—a pulpit consecrated by the genius of Dr. Armitage and

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\* Sunday, April 21, 1907

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the lofty devotion of those who are still leaders of the Church on earth. With what shrinking of the spirit, with what realization of incompetence, incompleteness, and personal unworthiness, with what feeling of oppressive and unutterable responsibility I take up this burden, I dare not tell. These things are not for public speech. Brethren, I throw myself upon your forbearance, your patience, your kindness, your generous faith, and I trust myself to God. I ask that He will give me strength, and give it through the medium of good men and good women who will believe in me and help me for His name's sake. I have come in the honest belief that the best work of my life is to be done in your land. I have come believing that I can serve our Lord best by joining you in the effort to get God's will done here, in the broad fields of your national life, even as it is done in Heaven. I have come in the hope of discharging a Ministry of Reconciliation. Before I accepted your

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call I determined that if I came it would be for this purpose, that if I ever spoke to you as your chosen pastor it would be first from this text in elucidation, at least in outline-sketch, of a Ministry of Reconciliation. For more than sixteen years I have preached to the largest Protestant congregation in the second city of the British Empire. On the morning when I laid down the pastorate of that Church I preached from this text, calling the Church and the City to witness that mine had been a Ministry of Reconciliation. And this morning I declare to you that in this spirit I wish to live my life amongst you, in this spirit to conceive every enterprise, cherish every ambition, preach every sermon, and breathe out every prayer before the throne of God.

Well, now, I invite you to discuss with me some of the things involved in a Ministry of Reconciliation. Such a ministry has an eternal significance, and about this none of us,

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if the spirit of Christ is in us, need fear misunderstanding or mistake. But it must also be conditioned by the necessities of the day and hour, by needs of place and circumstance. New ages produce new men. New men ask new questions, and are themselves driven to the solution of new problems. Here mistake is easy—lamentably easy for one coming, like myself, out of an old world into a new. I dare not dogmatise. You must let me feel my way. A dear, dead friend of mine, a Monseigneur of the Roman Church, when I told him that, according to the dogmas of his own creed, I was on the road to the wrong place, assured me that he took a far more hopeful view of my fate than that. He was of opinion that I should be saved by my invincible ignorance. I recognise, with Bishop Butler, that a knowledge of our ignorance may be of value to us; and I hope that the lingering sense of humor which has been granted even to an Englishman will avail to save me from posing as an



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authority on things I know nothing about. But you are sensible people. You will see that I am trying to master the conditions of the life which is to be mine. And if you smile at my mistakes, it will not be in malice but in good nature.

And so I conceive that the Ministry of Reconciliation must embrace the Reconciliation of Christians with one another. The Saviour's prayer stands: "That they all may be one"; but it stands as a mockery. This prayer does not demand for its fulfillment uniformity of worship, identity of creed, nor a single organisation. But it does demand one spirit, and that the spirit of Brotherhood. The prayer will not be realised until we are one in Faith, though not in doctrine; one in Hope, though not in method of working; and always and everywhere one in love of God and Man. What are the possibilities in this country of approximation towards the Saviour's ideal I

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have yet to learn. This I know: that while religions are many, Religion is one. I cannot join a narrow Church. I belong to the Church of all good men and good women everywhere. It is now as wide as all human life and deep as all human need. One day it will be as all-embracing as the Father's love. And its progress to-day and in the coming days rests on a growing appreciation of forms of goodness different from one's own. We have no need to minimise the differences which separate Church from Church and denomination from denomination. A condition of union is that you shall be worth uniting with. It is more conviction that we need and not less. We ought to hold with energy and tenacity the truths we know to be true. And we do no honour to the Spirit of Unity, while we dishonour ourselves, by a foolish complaisance which pretends that conscientious differences are of no account. Without sacrifice of conviction we are everyday discovering that the

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things wherein we already stand agreed are more in number, greater in importance, and eternally more fruitful than those which divide us. As to these which are distinctive and peculiar, they exist for good and not for evil. They forbid us to proselytise. We do not want to turn Methodists into Baptists nor Congregationalists into Presbyterians. Everyone of the great historic denominations has had entrusted to it either its own special truth, or else its own special way of holding and presenting truth, which fastens upon it the obligation to go on living and working until that truth is absorbed by the whole Church of God. Uniformity, therefore, is not to be sought. It would be antagonistic to the American spirit, which loves nothing better than the free play of individual forces. Federation, in this land of vast federations, ought to be possible. And deeper than Federation, the spirit of brotherhood, mutual admiration of character, mutual gratitude for services rendered to the

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commonwealth, mutual love in bonds of peace, produced by fellowship in one Gospel and consecration to one Lord. I hope, in due time, to take my place with the leaders of all the Churches in this land whose lives move toward a Ministry of Reconciliation.

This ministry demands the Reconciliation of the old truths with the new light. It involves the presentation of the old Gospel in harmony with the enlarged and enlarging knowledge of the new day which is upon us. Without it, there can be no reconciliation of Christian with Christian, of those, that is to say, who have received the new knowledge with those who fear it because they know nothing about it. It is a work which calls for delicacy of touch, large sympathy, continuous study, and unflinching faith. It is not easy work; but it must be done. Without it there can be no reconciliation of the educated man outside all religious organizations with the Church of his

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fathers. The hope of saving religion in our century turns upon the ability and willingness of the Church—in the first place of the pulpit and in the second of the pew—to re-state its dogmas, re-cast its formularies, and re-issue its message to the world in agreement with the progressive revelation in history and in science which God has given and which He still gives, and in reliance upon the ever-active operations of the Holy Spirit. We have to adopt and make our own the methods and assured results of reverent Biblical scholarship. We shall have our reward. To that combination of large historical knowledge with deep analytical insight and high religious feeling of which modern scholarship justly boasts, we owe the re-discovery of the Bible. From its pages, rich with the history of God's dealing with men, the Puritan of England, the Covenanter of Scotland, and your own great Pilgrims, drew their mighty confidence in the Lord of Hosts. Yet to our shame be it said,

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for many a modern man and woman it has lost its charm. Let us study the Bible and we shall love it. Fogs of deadly dullness which hang about it in the gloomy sanctuaries of Bibliolatry will be swept away, and it will live again. It will stand, not only as the glowing record of the revelation of God to a peculiar and notable people, but as, when all is said and done, the freshest, newest, truest book in all the world. We shall be sure that its messages are inspired, not because past ages have told us so, but because they inspire us, because they find us, find us in the deepest depths of our being, and reveal Christ to men.

This, too, proclaims the right attitude of Christianity to Science. I may not be able to assimilate and present to you from time to time the fruits of modern scientific research, as I hope to present those of Biblical study. But that will not be because of any fear of Science. The claims of a busy pastorate and

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of a wide philanthropy excuse to the preacher defects of scientific training. He does not need to pretend that he has mastered any physical science in the sense in which he ought to profess that he has understood his Bible. But let there be no mistake as to the Christian attitude. It is not one of tolerance, still less of fear. It is one of sympathy, gratitude, and hope. Every kingdom that science has made or is making its own, Christianity claims for Him who is Lord of All. Let astronomer or chemist or biologist open world on world to our gaze, and I have no fear for the Gospel of Calvary and of the Resurrection Morning. I will set no bounds to the limits of man's knowledge. I do not know to what man may attain. Neither will I seek to circumscribe the legitimate sphere of his inquiry. I refuse to draw a ring-fence round certain aspects of man's life, and declare them sacro-sanct, saying to the philosopher, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther." Let him push his in-

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vestigations beyond, far beyond, the furthest outposts of all that we conceive to-day, and probe into the soul of man—when he can find it. The conviction of my life is that the higher our knowledge mounts the deeper will be our faith in God. The little knowledge inclines our hearts to doubt: the fuller brings us back to Him. Whoso is afraid of truth does not believe in God.

This appeal, I remind you once more, is addressed to Christian people. Be *ye* reconciled with God. And the Ministry of Reconciliation must beseech you: Reconcile your business with God, your commerce, your whole system of economics, your politics, the principles which dominate your State and Federal policies, and the laws by which you live! Let these be reconciled with God.

Such a ministry is searching. It must ask you questions, and it must so force them in upon your soul with every argument, threat,



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and promise, with every warning of God's justice and all the wooing of His love, that you cannot get away from them—cannot silence the questioner by killing the preacher, because insurgent conscience is voicing them again, and if you cannot “down” by any device you have discovered yet! No: that is a task beyond you! And these questions must burn into your souls:

Can you reconcile your business with God? Was yesterday's “deal” in accordance with His mind? Will your books stand a heavenly audit? In your office dare you put up the prayer—that is to say, should you dare if you had any realising belief in the efficacy of prayer—“Abide with me; come not to sojourn but *abide* with me”? Will you reconcile your business methods with God? A ministry which does not force these questions home is sawdust and chaff.

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Then broaden your view. The whole round of life must be reconciled with God. In the helpful ministry of loving deeds, which outlive all the forms and dresses of human thought as the everlasting hills outlive the mists of the morning, the Christian Church incarnates the spirit of her Risen Lord. It has become so clear that not the dullest can miss it, that the Church which has nothing to say to social problems has in our day no claim to existence. Soon, if it be not laughed off the face of the earth, it will remain only as the house founded on the sand, the refuge of the idler, the self-seeker, and the coward, but a refuge which will fail them when the storms that are gathering break upon it. Religion is not a thing of the stars but of the streets. The Gospel for the Day is a Gospel of Social Service; the Gospel of the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount; the Gospel of Him who was rich and for our sake became poor; the Gospel whose supreme expression is Cal-

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vary and the Cross. It will not suffice that we should *dream* noble deeds, but *do* them, and that all day long, nor yet that we should look for a heaven in the future for ourselves if we have not, at least, tried to make a heaven in the present for our fellows. The sin of doing nothing is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins. We are here to save men. Man cannot be saved alone. The saved man must save men. The City must be saved. The State must be saved. The Nation must be saved. We are here to claim the world of politics as Christ's world, cleanse political life of its self-seeking, its practical atheism and corruption, and change our human society into a Kingdom of God. Politics for Israel, says Isaiah of Jerusalem: it is to make the city a centre of teaching and healing until all the nations say, "Come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord." "Politics for Englishmen," said John Milton; "it is to teach the nations how to live." And politics for

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America? You have not forgotten your own Whittier in one of his most inspired hours—

“Thy lesson all the world shall learn,  
The nations at thy feet shall sit:  
Earth’s farthest mountain tops shall burn  
With watch-fires at thine own uplit.”

Do you want to realize this? Will you try? Then you, too, have entered upon a Ministry of Reconciliation, and as ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us, together we will say to our world, “We beseech you, be ye reconciled to God.”

To this ministry no limits can be set. Its parish is the whole wide world of men. It embraces the highest and the lowest in its unmeasured scope. But there is one precise and specific application of it to which no American who loves his country, no man or woman between the Atlantic and the Pacific who cares for his country’s flag and his country’s honor, her fame and her future, can afford to be indifferent. It is not for me to lecture you

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about American conditions. It is for me to learn from what they are. But the most thoughtless onlooker from the old world who has ever read a page of history knows that, in the rush to your shores of millions upon millions of the European peoples, you are confronted by a problem such as no nation has ever yet had to solve since history began. I read the figures which set this problem visibly before the eyes of men, and I am lost in amazement. Then, as the facts behind the figures begin to take shape and substance, my brain reels before their immensity. You know what races of the old world are pouring themselves into this country. You know what colonies of people, separated from yourselves by thought, by feeling, by tradition, by religion, by language, are established within your city boundaries and in all the great cities of the land. This is an ethnic question, a race question. It is a question as to the *kind* of people the American people is to become. It is

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a question whether the primal American stock is to be vitiated by the inter-permeation of an inferior race. It is something still nearer: it is a national question, a question of political equilibrium, of the stability of Social Order and the Sovereignty of Law. For you know from what strata of society in the European countries the mass of these immigrants are now being drawn. And as the more restless and enterprising amongst them spread over the country, you know how, delivered from the despotisms of the old lands, some of them are ready to abuse the liberty of this, or, on the other hand, fall a prey to shameless spirits who would make their traffic out of their country's loss. And this you will agree, that the man who for selfish ends would set flame to the ingratitude, discontent, and envy, to the slumbering anarchic passions of these undeveloped soul, would be a traitor to the Republic and an enemy of the human race. And if you feel that, as you must, then, to the de-

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gree in which your patriotism is real, will the call of Christianity wake every generous impulse of your heart. For while the possibilities of legislative action must never be lost sight of, the deepest truth of all is this, that the best Christian is the best citizen, and that the surest way, the quickest way, the most economical and the most permanent way of making of these people good Americans and good patriots is to make them good Christians. To you—to you and me now—and to men and women like us, is entrusted the solemn responsibility and the splendid privilege. We have to change the mob into a commonwealth, the proletariat into a democracy. We have to evangelise the commonwealth and Christianise the democracy. And these untrained, undisciplined, politically dangerous millions we have to win for Christ.

You may think that it is not possible for me to see this as you see it. But you must let

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me answer that if you could see it as I see it—the marvellous opportunity, the tremendous duty, the far-shining glory which success in such work would bring—you would feel that little else was worth living for, while this, this is worth living and worth dying for, this God-given, God-inspired toil to bring the nation to the feet of Christ. This Ministry of Reconciliation is committed to us. We must go to the people, who as yet are no people, and as ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us, we must say, Be ye reconciled to God!

And now the great question arises: By what power may the follower of Christ hope to accomplish this glorious ministry? By the power of the living God—there is no other. By the manifestation of the God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. By the power of His spirit freely poured out on those who seek to draw near to Him. The method



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of Jesus was sublime in its simplicity. Millions of sermons have been preached, whole libraries have been written, to explain the plan of salvation. Yet a sentence can expound it. Jesus believed that men could be drawn to each other and drawn to God if they were first drawn to Himself. Let a man form a warm, personal, intimate, loving attachment for Jesus Christ, and there is a new creation. God is different: the world is different: men are different: and he himself is so different that the best way of describing it is to say that he has been born again. It is because this is so true in human experience, the world over, age by age, that I have come to preach Christ to you, and declare that, amid all changes of theological expression, God's deepest truth is stated in the familiar line,

Speak we of morals, O Thou Bleeding Lamb—  
The true morality is love of Thee!

Ideas are cold, repelling. We assent to them. Who could become impassioned by an

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idea? But when ideas take flesh and dwell amongst us, when they touch us with warm responsive hands, when they fold us in strong protecting arms, when they press us to glowing, palpitating breasts, we are theirs—body, soul, and spirit. The idea of God is full of awe. It dominates us, throws us prostrate before its unspeakable majesty. But God in Christ: that is different! He is the Desire of all Nations, the Saviour of the World, the Hope of the Race. It is our boast, our pride, our glory to confess Him among men. United with Him, nothing that is human is alien from us. Reconciled with God through Him we seek to be reconciled with all God's children everywhere. One with Him, we are one with all of God there is above us and one with all men here below. And it is because I believe that the arms once outstretched on Calvary's Cross of pain and shame are now flung wide to embrace in one brotherhood men of every race and name and colour, that I shall preach

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Christ to you, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified, Christ living, loving, reigning, and, in the pursuit of a Ministry of Reconciliation, as though God were entreating by me, shall beseech you, on behalf of Christ, Be ye reconciled with God.









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